

POLITICS
IN
State, County and City Institutions
of Charity,

A PAPER READ BY

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POLITICS IN STATE, COUNTY AND CITY INSTITUTIONS OF CHARITY.

The business of caring for the dependent members of society, the beneficiaries of our system of charity, is attended to in this State partly by the State itself or some of its political subdivisions, partly by private corporations aided with public money, and partly by private corporations supported wholly by private contributions. In so far as the State, or any of its political subdivisions, such as the county, town or city, has anything to do with the administration of charity, or contributes money for the support of it, of course there must be politics in it, and if we mean by politics the science and practice of good government, which is the better meaning of the term, the more politics there is in the administration of charity the better. But when we speak of politics in state, county and municipal institutions, it is generally understood that we use the term in its bad sense, as meaning the science and practice of bad government, a sense in which we have long been familiar with it in this city.

We doubtless all agree that politics in this latter sense of the term ought not to have anything to do with charitable institutions. If the managers of charitable institutions are political appointments in the bad sense; that is, if they are chosen without regard to their qualifications for the duties of their positions, or even with some regard to their qualifications, but primarily as a reward for their services to a political party, to a faction of that party, or to an individual politician, the danger is that they will not be qualified for their duties, or at least will not perform their duties so efficiently as those chosen primarily with regard to their fitness; and if they are not qualified for their duties, and do not perform their duties efficiently, it will follow, as the night follows the day, that charitable institutions will be badly managed. The inmates will suffer from neglect

or unwise treatment, the taxpayer will suffer from a waste of public funds, and the broader interests of society will suffer from the unwise treatment of this large class of dependent people, consisting of the destitute and the physical and mental defectives. There is no need of arguing here that the care of these classes of people requires expert knowledge and character and executive abilities of a high order. And there is no need of arguing here that these qualifications are less likely, on the whole and in the long run, to be secured, if the narrow partisan interests of a political party, a faction or an individual control in the selection of the officials.

I purpose, therefore, in this paper to consider first, how far politics in the bad sense does now actually prevail in the management of state, county and municipal institutions, and, secondly, to consider quite briefly the remedies suggested by the facts and the evidence, which I have been able to accumulate as the result of inquiries sent to a large number of well informed people.

First, let us consider the conditions in our state institutions. The State maintains twenty-six institutions, including hospitals for the insane and others, the "Craig Colony for Epileptics," the reformatories for children and those for women, the institutions for the feeble-minded, the State Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Bath, the Institution for the Blind at Batavia, the Asylum for Indian Children, and others.

Substantially all these institutions are under the control of Boards of Managers, consisting of from five to thirteen members chosen by the Governor with the consent of the Senate for terms of from three to seven years, and in many cases these terms end at successive periods, so as to secure a certain amount of continuity in the Boards. The members of the Boards receive no salary and involve no expense to the State except for travelling expenses. (These, with the travelling expenses of superintendents, amounted last year to the sum of \$6,913.77). They appoint a superintendent, who is the executive head of the institution, and this superintendent either appoints the subordinate employees himself or nominates them to the

Board for appointment. The Board generally has the power of fixing the salaries of the employees, although the superintendent may have the power of appointing them, but during the past few years this power has been transferred very largely to the authorities at Albany, who classify the employees into grades and fix the salaries of these grades. The successful management of an institution depends primarily upon the qualifications of the superintendent as the administrative head. If he is able and intelligent, he will make the management successful, unless he is improperly interfered with by the Board of Managers or hampered by inadequate appropriations of money. If he is ignorant and incapable, the management will be unsuccessful, no matter what may be the character of the Board. I have just spoken of inadequate appropriations. This is an important matter. As I understand it, the estimate of expenses of the state institutions for the ensuing fiscal year must be approved by the Board of Managers of the institution and by the State Board of Charities, and finally, of course, the Legislature must vote the necessary appropriations. And during any fiscal year no expenditures can be made unless they are first approved by the Comptroller of the State. It is easy to see, therefore, that a superintendent desiring to conduct his institution on the most approved principles may be absolutely thwarted as the result of his inability to get the necessary funds, or his inability to get them except by making concessions to bad politics, and right in this direction bad politics is likely to do some of its worst mischief.

The reports which I have received about the state institutions in answer to my inquiries sent throughout the State confirm the impression which generally prevails, that these state institutions as a whole are free to a very gratifying degree from the evil influence of bad politics.

One of my informants, it is true, says: "I think if the 'true inwardness' of every public institution were known, they would all be found in the hands of politicians and used for 'spoils' to a greater or less extent." But upon

the evidence furnished by the replies which I have received, this correspondent appears to be altogether too pessimistic. There is indeed evidence of yielding to political pressure in some instances in the appointment of members of the Board of Managers. There is also evidence of pernicious activity for partisan purposes on the part of some of the members of a few of these Boards. On the other hand, there is much gratifying evidence of fearless and courageous resistance to political pressure; evidence also that, even in those cases where there seems to be more or less of politics in the Board of Managers, the superintendent of the institution is a capable and honest official and the management of the institution satisfactory, and even creditable. One of my informants expresses the opinion that the influence which has been chiefly detrimental to public institutions in this State has been, not politics in the Board of Managers or in the administration of the institution, but the political influence brought to bear upon the Legislature. "It is probable," he says, "that the Superintendent and Managers are doing all they possibly can with the limited means at their disposal. I have never heard any adverse criticism on the ground that they were influenced by partisan motives. I believe that the political influence brought to bear upon the Legislature has been chiefly detrimental to the public institutions in this State." Indeed, a very noticable circumstance about these reports is that politics, although sometimes present to a greater or less degree in the Board of Managers, appears to have very much less bad effect than one would expect in the actual management of the institutions. Upon this point the following report on one institution is an interesting one. My informant writes:

"In the appointment of new members of the Board of Managers, the politics of a person or persons suggested has been made the basis of appointment over and above all else. Still, it is only fair to the boards that I have personally known about to add that both men and women of business sagacity, professional experience and willingness to devote time and thought to the prosperity and

well being of the institution, have been placed as managers here, but politics has ruled such appointments, if not the appointees themselves.

It most certainly has been customary not to reappoint managers, no matter how long and faithfully have been their services, unless their politics coincided with the party in power.

The superintendent was appointed entirely upon the basis of fitness and qualifications for the position, and I would add that despite all the work we have done together I do not know the politics of this superintendent.

The present superintendent is not influenced by political considerations, but is surrounded with an efficient corps of women workers, whose qualifications were 'fitness for the places occupied.' But in the case of the male employees—steward, coachman, engineer, watchman, laborers, politics entered in as a large factor when appointments were made.

Political influence does not interfere in the management of the institution or of the discipline thereof. The question has always been, 'What is for the best?' The superintendent and assistants give most care and constant study to this question with regard to management and discipline, and the Board has never hampered them in carrying out their plans for both temporal and moral improvement of the inmates.

I am glad to say that I know of few cases of subordinate positions, which are well and faithfully filled, lost through partisan influence among the employees; among the women employees this naturally would not be the case. A snarl in politics a few years ago removed some of the male employees. But generally employees have been retained for good and faithful service, even though the political complexion of the Board changed entirely.

Awarding contracts for supplies, as far as I have knowledge, is controlled almost entirely by the Comptroller, and supplies for this institution of which I speak are not lavish, sometimes quite the reverse. Wastefulness of public funds cannot so far in the history of this institution be charged against it.

In all the new buildings erected I cannot think that anything but good work has gone into the buildings and finishings, and in all this most careful supervision brought about desired results."

Some of my reports are even better than the foregoing. Thus one of my correspondents writes:

"My present informant is a man of unprejudiced and judicial temper, who has had considerable opportunity to learn the inner workings of the institution. He says that the selection of members of the Board of Managers has been uniformly good, and that the appointments have been well made. It has not been customary to change the personnel of the board on account of political affiliations, and the faithful members have been usually re-appointed. The present superintendent possesses special qualifications for his position, and although political influences were doubtless operative in his appointment, he is recognized to be well fitted for the position, and he is very careful not to allow politics to influence him in the performance of his duties to the detriment of the interests of the institution. Political influence evidently plays no part whatever among the employees of the institution, and tenure of office seems to depend wholly upon fitness and is not influenced by partisan considerations. Contracts for supplies are economically and impartially awarded, and there is no tendency to waste public funds. The building contracts have been impartially let, and the work has been so carefully inspected that many of the contractors have lost money. The public funds have not been used, so far as I can find, to enrich any individual. The only charge that might be made is that some of the buildings recently erected are needlessly luxurious. On the whole, however, the impression among impartial observers seems to be that the institution under its present superintendent is remarkably well managed and singularly free from partisan influences."

I have another report about another institution which is even more favorable than the one I have just read. In fact, it presents an absolutely perfect condition of affairs, so far as the influence of bad politics is concerned; and, in general, it may be said that, with one or two notable exceptions, the state charitable institutions of this State are quite free from the influence of politics, that the members of the Board of Managers have, on the whole, been well chosen, and are men of excellent character and qualifications, that when politics still exists in any Board, it is not influential enough to dictate the appointment of unfit superintendents, and that the superintendents themselves are not influenced by politics, and that where the management of a state institution is unwise or inefficient, it is because the man duly qualified for the work, although honestly sought for, could not be or has not been found. It must not be forgotten that mistakes are often made in the conduct of private business; even in private business it is often difficult enough to find men of fitness, and men thought to be fit and chosen solely on account of fitness often prove to be unfit. What occurs in private business may occur in the conduct of public business, and it is quite a grievous error to suppose that all mismanagement of public affairs is chargeable to politics.

The activities of the counties in the administration of public charity have been limited principally to the management of almshouses, and to the dispensing of outdoor relief. Boards of supervisors, superintendents of the poor and keepers of almshouses are the officials who are responsible for this work. Supervisors and superintendents of the poor are elective officers. In a few cases the almshouse keeper is elected, but generally he is appointed by the superintendents, and frequently the superintendents are themselves the keepers of almshouses, appointed as such by the boards of supervisors. The superintendent of the poor is the chief executive officer and the one chiefly responsible for the management of the almshouse, but he may be hampered or

helped a great deal by the board of supervisors through its control of the purse strings.

I have received reports from about forty counties of the State, and I cannot give you a clearer idea of the actual conditions in these counties than by quoting from some of them.

One of my correspondents writes:

“The present superintendent is a politician who has done well. During the last eighteen years there has been a gradual improvement in the administration of the poorhouse and public sentiment sustaining this.”

Another correspondent writes:

“The man who can get the votes is the man elected superintendent, and fortunate if he proves to be a good person for the place. For a second term, the man who has promoted the welfare of the institution and the inmates can be more easily elected. The present almshouse keeper and his wife are very good, and I think it would not be good policy for any superintendent to try to remove them. No one has tried for several years.”

From another correspondent comes this refreshing report:

“Our superintendents have all been good men who have discharged their duties with fidelity and conscientiousness. Politics seem to be forgotten as soon as they are elected, and the institution has never in any manner suffered because of political interference.”

Now look for a moment at the other side of the picture:

“In this county the almshouse keeper is an inefficient saloon keeper. There is always an effort to employ as many relatives and friends as possible without reference to their fitness for the place, and while it would be impossible to prove it, the general impression prevails among the persons acquainted with almshouse work that those who are retained

are either kept by some political pressure or make it an object for the keeper to retain them."

Another correspondent says:

"The superintendent has been in office for thirty years. I believe officers in every department to be as good men as there are in this community."

But we are reminded by the report from another correspondent that the millennium has not yet come:

"No superintendent is elected for more than two terms. Partisan influence controls and out-door relief is also affected. Numerous instances have come to our knowledge in which voters undeserving of relief have made upon overseers of the poor demands upon the ground of past political support and of threatened opposition in the future in case their demands are not complied with. In purchasing supplies they are compelled by political considerations to distribute their orders to storekeepers who charge full retail prices and often supply inferior articles when good supplies can be purchased in bulk of wholesale dealers at a large saving to the county. A case of actual swindling operations was exposed some years ago. Most of the county superintendents of both parties have been in the habit in a greater or less degree of using the almshouse as headquarters for their political followers, where expensive dinners and entertainments were furnished at public expense."

These expensive dinners are, indeed, a novel method of relieving the gloom of the almshouse, by introducing into it a little of the good cheer and fellowship of life.

But, as against these disheartening conditions, contemplate for a moment the picture presented by a correspondent from another county:

"I do not think politics has anything to do with charity. I do not pay any attention to politics. Governor Odell was in town last week. I did not even go to see him. Politics is no part of my living, hence no part of my pleasure."

But it is not everywhere that we find such stern old Romans as these.

Here is another report, such as is often given:

“Political influences act as a check upon the activities and independence of the Superintendent of the Poor. He is not free to exercise his best judgment. Such influence has been manifest in the selection of plans. It has not been apparent in the purchasing of inferior food or other supplies or in the neglect of the physical well-being of the inmates of the county house.”

My next report is not so favorable:

“Whoever was elected would corrupt the ballot by distributing favors to both parties by purchasing produce and goods of politicians. Later a Christian gentleman was elected who served without fear or favor, purchasing the goods where he could purchase them cheapest. When his term was out, however, they had no further use for him. I have never had any fault to find with his successor as to the manner in which he has conducted the almshouse. I think he is doing well, but I have never been able to forget the way he was nominated.”

Again a favorable report:

“We have little to complain of here, but when employed in an institution under the Commissioners of Charities and Corrections of New York City in 1874-75, I saw crying abuses in the filling of subordinate positions in this institution.”

In the light of the result of our last municipal election, how far off and remote that period, 1874-75, and those abuses now seem to us!

In this same report my correspondent says:

“I am in favor of extending Civil Service requirements to county administration of public charity.”

Another report states:

“We have had two superintendents who have used their office dishonestly, but on the whole I think the superintendents have been faithful to

their duty. Partisan influences if they have any effect tend to unwise economy. In one or two instances the inmates of the poorhouse have suffered from want of sufficient bedding and clothes and perhaps insufficient food. On the whole, I think good men have been selected for superintendents."

Another of my informers is quite pessimistic, stating that politics rule, but adds "the present superintendent is apparently doing well and the best attendants and nurses have retained their positions under the last change of administration." Still, the reports states: "The superintendent opposes improvements that should be made in order to make his expenses seem less and doubtless is extravagant in other places."

In a discriminating report from another county, we are told:

"Managers are wise enough to select men with some qualifications for office, but political considerations are first. Other things being equal the fittest men are chosen. The same considerations exist regarding the minor positions, and utterly unworthy men would not be retained in deference to public sentiment, as it would lose votes: still honest and efficient keepers would lose their positions, if others with more political influence desired them. In the matter of building and repairing and the purchasing of supplies, no doubt trade is placed where it will do the most good, but with little or no misuse of public funds. The physical and moral well being of the inmates are above the average. Officials study to make all comfortable."

My next report is a more favorable one:

"The administration of public charity does not suffer from the influence of politics. The county is largely one sided in politics, and our public officials in charge of the poor, if efficient, are generally continued for long terms. The charities seem to be well administered here. I never heard complaints that political intrigues were interfering with them."

In some of the reports we are told that everything is controlled by politics, and that things are very discouraging, and yet, in one instance, where politics seem to rule everything, the present superintendent is a good one, and the almshouse is in fine condition. But while the inmates may not suffer, politics may have a bad effect in other directions.

I quote from another report on this point:

“The superintendent is not the keeper, but the keeper is appointed by the superintendent, and generally the man selected is one who has a strong ‘pull’ politically. This, however, does not apply to the present keeper, who is attentive to his duties and is very efficient. The keeper is sometimes chosen through intimate personal friendship, yet politics has more to do with his appointment than anything else. Efficiency, honesty and fidelity are not always rewarded by retention in office. Keepers and subordinates are sometimes changed to give place to applicants backed by political friends. For many years all repairs and improvements were under the direct management of the keeper and superintendent. More recently the County Buildings Committee has taken charge of all repairs and erections of new buildings, and from all that can be seen or heard the result has been an increase in expense, with very little to show for it, and in every way unsatisfactory. In one case a favored builder was permitted to get a second bid after the other bids were made known to him, the lowest responsible bidder being entirely ignored. In performing his contract the favored one succeeded in getting part of his work omitted, and yet was paid a large sum of money for extra work.”

My next report is especially interesting in the light of our recent political experience:

“It is the record here that when one political party so far dominates all other parties as to be certain of its continuance in power, the tendency invariably has been to select the best men. When, however, there has been a fusion of parties in opposition to the dominant party and the fusion party

strives to get a second term, and the margin of safety for the usually dominant party is small, then there is a distribution of offices or a promise of spoils for the sake of winning temporary strength, and fitness is lost sight of. But in spite of this, political influences in general do not control the action of the officials in the performance of their duties. The fear of increasing taxes is a check. The better sentiment of the community is another restraint."

There is much evidence in my reports of the good counteracting effect of public opinion. One of my informants says on this point:

"The candidate who can control the most votes in the convention gets the nomination, and the number of votes which he can control depends upon his political strength without much reference to his fitness for office. The same considerations would apply in the appointment of the keeper. At the same time, the convention would not be likely to nominate or the superintendent appoint a notoriously unfit man. That would not be considered good politics."

I will close by quoting from two other reports which are very encouraging:

"From full knowledge of the conditions here for ten years, I can say that in no way does partisan politics affect the work of the charity officials improperly. I have known merchants who thought they should have trade because they were Republicans, but they did not get it. I have been much interested in this topic for years and know all the stock assertions that appear, based undoubtedly on facts so far as most places are concerned. But there is practically nothing in the way of unfortunate partisan influence in the administration of public relief in this place."

My last report carries us to the height of the ideal:

"When it was necessary to change those in charge of certain institutions, the Superintendent of the

Poor was reproached by a member of his own party because he had appointed a member of the opposite political party. He replied, 'I wanted Mrs. ——— as Matron because I believed she was eminently fitted for the position. I did not care a rap what her husband's politics might be.' To the fact that politics enter so little into the control of the management of our Almshouse do we consider that we owe its great efficiency."

Considering these reports as a whole, several points are noticeable:

1. So far as superintendents and overseers of the poor are concerned, politicians, securing office by political methods, are, much more frequently than otherwise, efficient and honest officials.

2. Where they are inefficient and dishonest, it is more frequently the public and the taxpayers than the inmates who suffer.

3. Sound public sentiment and fear of the honest voter often acts as a restraining influence, and sometimes exacts good positive results, and indeed it is due to this more than to any other single influence that we get such good results from men elected and appointed for political reasons and without regard to their qualifications.

Reducing the substance of these reports to figures, I find that politics without regard to qualifications appears to control the selection of superintendents and keepers of almshouses in about two-thirds of the cases. In the other third, although, of course, the superintendents and keepers of almshouses generally belong to some political party, and owe their election or appointment to political influences, due regard is had to their qualifications. With respect to the subordinate positions politics appears to control 60 per cent. of the cases, and does not control in the other 40 per cent. As to the effect of politics on the actual administration of charity, it appears that while politics, as we have seen,

controls the election of the superintendent and almshouse keeper, and the appointment of subordinate officials to the extent of $66\frac{2}{3}$ per cent and 60 per cent. respectively, the bad effect of politics, so far as the welfare of the inmates of the institutions is concerned, is represented by the percentage of only 15 to 20, and, so far as extravagance and wastefulness of public funds are concerned, is represented by a percentage of 35. Superintendents, it appears, are generally renominated, that is, in 82 per cent. of the cases, but this showing is not so favorable as it appears on its face, because the bad superintendents, as well as the good ones, are generally renominated. It has often been supposed that superintendents have not been elected for more than two terms, but there is evidently no definite unwritten rule on this subject, for, according to the reports, in about two-thirds of the cases more than two terms are allowed.

As to out-door relief, the reports are that, so far as the matter can be traced, the influence of politics is not apparent in 80 per cent. of the cases. This, however, I take it, is evidence not so much that politics does not affect out-door relief, as simply that it does not affect it in such a way as to occasion the flagrant scandals and abuses which appear in many cases, and of which specific evidence is contained in my reports.

The reports that I have received, it should be said, are, of course, incomplete, and many of them are no doubt influenced more or less by the temperament of the writer, whether optimistic or otherwise. In reducing the conclusions to percentages a word of caution may, therefore, be in order against regarding them as reflecting the exact situation. They are, of course, simply indications of the probable nature of the facts, and as such are of interest and value as aids to the formation of a correct judgment, though by no means final and conclusive.

Limiting my consideration of municipal institutions to those of this city, I must say that the history of the public charitable institutions of this city presents a discredit-

able record and, were it not for the improvements under the present Commissioner, a very discouraging one.

The Commissioners of Charity and Correction (since 1895 the Commissioners of Charities), have with few exceptions been appointed on account of political considerations—that is, the appointees have been men who had no previous knowledge of the subject, had not been connected with charitable administration of any sort, and had been actively identified with politics. Some of them have undoubtedly been men of good repute, but unfortunately those who have had the character and perhaps the capacity, did not take much interest in the work or give much time to it, and some who have had the character and an interest in the work, have lacked judgment and administrative capacity. The result was that in January, 1895, when Mayor Strong came into office, and only in a little less degree in January, 1898, when our present Commissioner assumed office, conditions generally were very unsatisfactory, and there was room for improvement everywhere. Although the appointment of Mr. Keller was a political one—he himself publicly stated at the beginning of his administration that he was a Tammany man and would always be one—and although he was entirely unknown in the charitable world at the time of his appointment and probably had not previous to his appointment given much thought to the subject of charitable administration, it is a very great pleasure to me to be able to say that his administration has been much more satisfactory than that of any of his predecessors during the past twenty-five years. Himself a man of intelligence and ability, and with the fresh interest of a student in the subject, he has cordially invited the assistance of all who have been willing to help him, and has earnestly co-operated with them in endeavoring to remedy many of the abuses and evils which had long existed in the administration of charity here. I would not, however, flatter Mr. Keller, nor, I am sure, would he flatter himself with the suggestion that the evil influences of bad politics have been entirely eliminated from our

municipal institutions. It is true that some of the flagrant scandals and those which have attracted most public attention, notably the occurrences in Bellevue Hospital, have not been directly chargeable to politics, and Mr. Keller has not been directly responsible for them. It is also true that the statement in regard to the increase in the number of employees and the increased expenses of conducting the hospitals, which was published as a campaign document, was inaccurate, misleading and unfair to the Commissioner, and the Commissioner's reply, generously published by the newspaper which had printed the original statement, was a complete answer to it. But notwithstanding all this, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is still much to be improved in the administration of our public charity here, and that bad politics has here and there shown its baleful effect, and it is really inspiring to think what may be accomplished by the incoming administration in the direction of taking our public institutions once for all out of politics and placing them upon an enduring basis of sound principles, so that the administration of public charity here shall be as creditable to this community as the administration of the state institutions is creditable to the State at large.

I have left myself but little time to speak of the remedies, and what I shall now say about them will be simply by way of suggestion, as I do not feel sure enough of my facts to speak with unqualified confidence.

As the conditions in the state institutions are, on the whole, satisfactory, I would make no radical changes in them. It has sometimes been thought that large boards with unpaid members are inefficient as administrative bodies. But the Boards of Managers of state institutions appoint superintendents to do the administrative work, and their function is principally to exercise a general supervision and control. In recent times there seems to be a tendency to diminish the powers of these boards, and especially in the matter of the control of expenses, but it is doubtful whether this policy is a wise one. I should be disposed to favor a system of administration by boards

consisting of not less than seven members, with terms ending at successive periods, so that the term of not more than one member would expire in any one year. And I would give them such powers as are needed to exercise an effective control. The considerations in favor of this, which occur to me, are:

1. Such boards can accumulate a special fund of experience and wisdom, which is greater than that of any average man. It becomes the experience and wisdom of the board, and the board is a self-educating body, each member as he enters it acquiring readily its knowledge and experience.

2. With a slowly changing body, no one state administration can appoint a majority of its members, and, this being so, there is less political pressure for places on the board and less difficulty in resisting such pressure as there is. Indeed, it ought not to be difficult to maintain the practice, which has often been followed, of reappointing the more capable and experienced members for many terms.

3. The boards now already constituted are, on the whole, good boards, and the practice of making appointments, as established by long usage and the traditions of the service, are such that these boards are likely to be kept substantially non-partisan.

4. The experience in many parts of this country, notably in the management of hospitals, has been that the system of unpaid boards is a good one, and by the revised charter of this city, which is to go into effect on January 1st next, this system has been adopted for Bellevue Hospital in response to the earnest demands of some of those who are familiar with the needs of that institution.

5. There is an advantage to the State in having so large a number of men studying the problems of charitable administration and interesting themselves in charitable

work. It cannot be too much emphasized that the care of these wards of the State, the insane, the epileptics, the feeble minded, and the inmates of the Houses of Refuge and Industrial Schools, requires expert knowledge of a high order, and that there is still much to be learned in these fields. On the whole, I think better results are to be expected from the present system of many Boards and from the diversity of methods and experiments, than from too much simplification and centralization. A wise economy is always desirable, but wise economy involves other considerations than those of the immediate outlay in dollars and cents, charitable administration being in its nature rather complicated, and involving religious feelings and influences, and perhaps other factors which do not enter into the other business of the State.

As for the county institutions, I would extend to them the civil service rules, so far as they have been found practicable and advantageous in governing appointments in the state institutions. The rules are now applicable to a very large number of the positions in the state institutions, and have doubtless been instrumental in eliminating politics from them. Similar rules have also recently been made applicable to the institutions in this City, but they have not yet been extended to any counties outside of New York City, except Erie.

We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that, in spite of the civil service rules, if they are not well administered, or even if they are well administered, we cannot obtain the best results unless these rules and the whole administration of charity are supported by an enlightened and effective public opinion. As Mrs. Lowell, in her report, says, "The one sovereign remedy is an awakened public conscience." The difference between our own times and the age of *Oliver Twist*, with its ingenious poorhouse system of starvation on a diet of gruel and water, as a simple means of lightening the burden of the taxpayer, is not a difference of politics, but a difference of civilization and of public sentiment. This

age of the X-ray and wireless telegraphy, by which solid and opaque bodies can be penetrated, has also discovered the art of transmitting the electric waves of public conscience into the dark places of the body politic, and to this circumstance more than to any other single influence do we owe it that the scandals and abuses of a generation ago have largely disappeared from the administration of public charity. What we need then above everything else is this influence of a steady and enlightened public opinion, and whatever agencies and instrumentalities there are for making such opinion effective are the best means of improving the administration of charity. At the present time and in this State we are fortunate in having many such agencies and instrumentalities.

First, there is the State Board of Charities, a non-partisan Board, consisting of men of high character, experience and knowledge. They have done a vast amount of good in the way of creating a sound public opinion and bringing it to bear upon the practical administration of charity.

The appointments to this Board have almost without exception been non-partisan, its members have been chosen for fitness, and in its last report the Board committed itself unreservedly to continue the non-partisan policy. In view of the good work which it has already done and is capable of doing, no greater evil could befall the charitable institutions of the State than the introduction of politics into this powerful central Board.

Second, we have the State Charities Aid Association, with its county visiting committees in most of the counties of this State. These county visiting committees, visiting the almshouses, reporting upon the abuses which they discover and commending the improvements that are made, and stimulating in their communities a wider interest in charitable work, I believe are to be credited with a considerable part of the improve-

ments which have been made during the past quarter of a century in the administration of county charities. All honor to these devoted men and women, who, in quiet and obscure places, with tact, judgment and unwearying patience, have carried on this beneficent work.

Finally, we have the influence which comes from the large body of workers in the private charitable institutions of the State, especially the Charity Organization Societies, from publications devoted to the interests of charity, such as the *Charities Review*, from the National Conferences of Charity and from these State Conferences. These meetings, with their discussions, and the public interest which they excite, have been helpful not only in inculcating the principles of sound philanthropy, but also, what is quite as important, in supplying the enthusiasm and zeal which are needed to carry these principles into the practical work of administration. For supplying this enthusiasm and zeal nothing is better adapted than occasions such as these, with their opportunities for gaining a better knowledge of the lives of these men and women, devoted in whole or in part to the service of their fellow-men, these lives filled with human sympathy and that moral strenuousness, which, with its patience, its courage and its persistent energy, transcends that other strenuousness, which on broader and more conspicuous fields may win more of the world's applause.

